

Message Text

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ACTION SS-30

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 CCO-00 DODE-00 CIAE-00

USSS-00 NSAE-00 INRE-00 /031 W

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Z 130755Z OCT 73

FM AMEMBASSY LISBON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC FLASH 8614

S E C R E T LISBON 3780

EXDIS

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR

SUBJECT: LAJES FLIGHTS

REF: STATE 203562

SUMMARY: I GOT FOREIGN MINISTER PATRICIO OUT OF BED AND READ REFTEL INSTRUCTIONS TO HIM OVER TELEPHONE. HE CONSIDERED ANSWER TO BE NEGATIVE, PRESSED ARGUMENTS FOR PROVISION OF SAMS, AND INSISTED THAT I REITERATE HIS POSITION TO USG WITH REGARD SAMS IN HOPE EQUIPPING HIM WITH MORE POSITIVE POSITION WHEN HE SEES PRIME MINISTER ON MATTER THIS MORNING. END SUMMARY

1. AFTER HAVING REFTEL INSTRUCTIONS READ TO HIM, PATRICIO SAID THAT HE CONSIDERED THE ANSWER UNFORTUNATELY NEGATIVE. HE SAID HE HAD TALKED ON THE SUBJECT WITH A CABINET COLLEAGUE OF HIS WHO WAS EVEN MORE HORRIFIED THAN HE AT RISKS, ESPECIALLY AN OIL BOYCOTT AND TERRORISM. PATRICIO SAID HE COULD NOT UNDERSTAND WHY USG WAS UNWILLING TAKE RISKS ON PORTUGAL'S BEHALF WHEN ASKING PORTUGAL TO RUN SUCH GRAVE RISKS ON USG BEHALF.

2. I REMINDED HIM THAT US, EVEN BEFORE THIS SITUATION, HAD BEEN ONE OF PORTUGAL'S BEST FRIENDS AT A TIME WHEN WE SEE ALL AROUND US VOICES CRITICAL OF PORTUGAL INCREASING, INCLUDING MANY COUNTRIES WHOSE TRADITIONAL FRIENDSHIP WITH PORTUGAL MUCH OLDER THAN OURS. DESPITE THE COSTS TO US AND CRITICISMS OF
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US FOR DOING SO, US HAS REMAINED STEADFAST IN ITS FRIENDSHIP WITH PORTUGAL. I EMPHASIZED PARTICULARLY REFTEL POINT THAT PRESENT SITUATION PRESENTED A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO REVERSE A TREND IN THE US, ESPECIALLY IN CONGRESS,

OF ANIMOSITY TOWARDS PORTUGAL.

3. PATRICIO SAID THAT THIS SOUNDED EXACTLY LIKE WHAT AMBASSADOR KNIGHT HAD SAID WHEN URGING PORTUGAL TO VOTE AGAINST PRC ADMISSION TO UN, AND YET PORTUGAL HAD SEEN NO RESULTANT BENEFIT TO IT FROM HAVING ACCEDED TO US REQUEST ON THAT OCCASION. I POINTED OUT THAT CONSTITUENCY AND SYMPATHY FOR ISRAEL VASTLY GREATER IN US THAN THAT FOR CHINA HAD EVER BEEN. EVEN THOSE PREVIOUSLY CRITICAL OF PORTUGAL WOULD HAVE TO BE FAVORABLY INFLUENCED BY FACT PORTUGAL WAS WILLING AT CONSIDERABLE RISK TO ITSELF TO HELP SAVE ISRAEL FROM DESTRUCTION, WHICH IS WHAT THIS COMES DOWN TO.

4. PATRICIO OBSERVED THAT THE DENIAL ON THE SAMS WAS MADE IN REFTTEL WITHOUT ANY REASONS BEING GIVEN. I SAID THAT AS I HAD EXPLAINED BEFORE, PROVISION OF SAMS WOULD BE BREACH OF LONG-STANDING ARMS EMBARGO, WOULD HAVE MUCH WIDER ADVERSE IMPLICATIONS FOR US, AND WOULD SERIOUSLY COMPROMISE OUR ABILITY TO MAINTAIN A DIALOGUE WITH COUNTRIES HOSTILE TO PORTUGAL UPON WHOM WE CAN EXERCISE A MODERATING INFLUENCE. I STRESSED AGAIN THE UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY THIS SITUATION PRESENTED, NOTING THAT FOR THOSE OF US WHO OFTEN FIND THEMSELVES SEEKING FAVORABLE RESPONSES ON MATTERES DEALING WITH PORTUGAL, THE FACT OF A COOPERATIVE RESPONSE FROM PORTUGAL ON THIS ISSUE WOULD CONSTITUTE A MOST EFFECTIVE AND DURABLE LEVER.

5. PATRICIO SAID THAT THIS WAS OF COURSE A DECISION THAT HE COULD NOT TAKE ALONE, BUT WOULD HAVE TO PRESENT TO THE PRIME MINISTER, WHICH HE WOULD DO IN THE COURSE OF THE MORNING. IT WOULD GREATLY FACILITATE A FAVORABLE DECISION IF, INSTEAD OF THE NEGATIVE REPORT HE NOW WOULD HAVE TO MAKE, HE WERE INSTEAD ABLE TO PROVIDE A POSITIVE POSITION. HE SAID THE POSSIBILITY OF AIRCRAFT BEING INTRODUCED BY THE OTHER SIDE IN PORTUGUESE GUINEA WAS NOT JUST PREDICATED ON THE POSSIBILITY OF A LIBYAN REACTION. THERE WERE ALREADY MIGS IN CONAKRY AND THE PORTUGUESE HAD INFORMATION THAT THE MIGS MIGHT SOON BE USED IN THE WAR. IF THEY WERE, THIS WOULD
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ALTER THE SITUATION DRASTICALLY. WITHOUT THE MEANS OF DEFENDING THEMSELVES FROM THIS THREAT, THE PORTUGUESE WOULD BE FACED WITH A QUESTION OF SURVIVAL. HE THEREFORE REQUESTED THAT I AGAIN PUT HIS REQUEST TO THE USG. I RESPONDED THAT I WAS VIRTUALLY CERTAIN THAT THE ANSWER WOULD HAVE TO BE NEGATIVE. HE ASKED WHY, WHEN ALL PORTUGAL WAS ASKING FOR WAS A DEFENSIVE WEAPON, NOTING THAT WHAT THEY HAD IN MIND WAS THE "RED EYE" MISSILE. I REHEARSED MY PREVIOUS ARGUMENTATION AND ADDED THAT THIS WOULD INVOLVE US DIRECTLY IN THE CONFLICT THERE AFTER HAVING SUCCESSFULLY KEPT OURSELVES UNINVOLVED ON EITHER SIDE FOR SO LONG. HE SAID THAT THE OTHER SIDE HAS NO LIMITATIONS PLACED ON IT BY ITS FRIENDS AND YET PORTUGAL'S FRIENDS REFUSE TO RESPOND TO PORTUGAL'S NEEDS. HE FOUND IT

HARD TO UNDERSTAND HOW WE COULD MAINTAIN IN THE MIDDLE EAST
A POLICY OF ENSURING A MILITARY BALANCE BUT ALLOW AN IMBALANCE
TO DEVELOP IN PORTUGUESE AFRICA. HE
AGAIN REQUESTED THAT I RAISE THE MATTER AGAIN WITH THE USG SO
THAT HE COULD HAVE A FINAL POSITION TO PRESENT TO THE PRIME
MINISTER. HE ALSO HOPED THAT HE COULD HAVE ANSWERS TO SOME
QUESTIONS AMBASSADOR THEMIDO HAD RAISED, ON WHICH HE DID NOT
ELUCIDATE BEYOND SAYING THAT THEY WERE RELATED TO THE AZORES
AGREEMENT RENEGOTIATION.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 11 MAY 1999
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: INSTRUCTIONS, FOREIGN RELATIONS, AMITY, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 13 OCT 1973
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: thigpegh
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973LISBON03780
Document Source: ADS
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: n/a
Film Number: P800170-1265
From: LISBON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19731065/abqcefti.tel
Line Count: 121
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, TEXT ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: STATE 203562
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: thigpegh
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 21 SEP 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <21-Sep-2001 by rowellE0>; APPROVED <30-Oct-2001 by thigpegh>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: LAJES FLIGHTS
TAGS: MARR, PEPR, PO
To: STATE FLASH
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005